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SOCIAL THOUGHT IN AMERICAN FICTION (1910-1917)

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By HAZEL WILKINSON, A. M.¹

OUTLINE

- I. Extent of social thought in fiction.
- II. Types of social fiction dealing with various social problems:—
 1. The problem of general social unrest.
 2. Labor problems.
 3. Socialization of the modern church.
 4. Immigration and Americanization.
 5. Criminology and liquor problems.
 6. Socialization of the newspaper and other problems.
- III. The value of social thought in fiction.

Social thought has always been present in fiction to a certain extent, but not until recent years has it held a definite place. During the last few decades there has been developing a social consciousness which has led an ever increasing number of people to become interested in the social conditions surrounding them, and in the consequent social problems. This interest is naturally reflected in the books which are written to attract their attention. In almost all cases, this tendency results merely in the insertion, here and there, of a paragraph concerning some problem of social import. There are certain books, however, which do more than this, and whose entire plots are built upon a frame-work of modern

¹Editor's Note:—The author of this monograph received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1917 from the University of Southern California and the degree of Master of Arts in 1918 from the same institution. The monograph is a part of the thesis which was submitted by Miss Wilkinson in candidacy for the degree of Master of Arts. Miss Wilkinson was graduate Assistant in Sociology (1917-1918) in the University of Southern California.

sociological thought. It is with these last that this monograph is particularly concerned.

In making a study of social thought in fiction, many interesting questions arise. In the first place, from the standpoint of quantity, what place does social thought hold in fiction? Can an estimate be made of the general percentage of books in which social problems figure? What is the value from a scientific standpoint of the material found? Lastly, careful consideration should be given to the possible place that fiction may hold in the spread of social thought in the future.

The question of the extent of social thought in fiction will be discussed first. It is impossible, in a limited space, to cover the entire field of fiction which has appeared within the last few years. Consequently, the writer has selected as nearly as possible a representative group of books, and from these determined the percentage which are social in character. Such a group is found in the lists of best selling fiction, popularly known as the "six best sellers." On this basis, then, a survey has been made of these books as listed in the monthly reports of the *Bookman* from 1910 to 1917 inclusive.

Such a survey brings out many points of value. Each year there are the titles of from twenty to twenty-seven books which appear in these lists. Some of them hold their places for only one month, others appear for several months, still others almost a year. In the eight years which have been considered here, 194 books were listed at one time or another. Of these, twenty-one I would class as social in character, that is 10.8 per cent. The proportion of these which appeared each year is indicated in the following table:

YEAR	NO. OF BOOKS	SOCIAL FICTION	PER CENT
1910	27	2	7.4
1911	20	1	5
1912	22	0	0
1913	26	4	15.4
1914	24	1	4.2
1915	25	4	16
1916	25	5	20
1917	25	4	16
8 yrs.	194	21	10.8%

In considering this table, several significant points may be noted. In the first place, except for the year 1914, there has

been a decided increase in the proportion of social fiction, indicated both by the number of books and the percentage per year. Also the fact that the general average is 10.8 per cent. of the total number of books is important. This is not a large percentage in itself, but it is noteworthy when we consider the broad field of fiction and the many types of story which are written.

The subject matter with which these twenty-one books dealt was varied. The largest number, five, considered the problem of capital and labor in its different phases. Next in number were four books which concerned themselves with aspects of the problem of the family as a social institution. Three were general in character. Two were "problem" novels. Two dealt with the social rôle of the church. The remainder represented single examples of the broad scope of social thought in fiction, from the Negro problem to that of crime. The above classification of social fiction shows the largest number of books to have been written on the subject of capital and labor. The same proportion holds true in the field as a whole. The more specific and less commonly known social problems have only recently begun to receive attention in fiction.

The actual value of the social thought contained in fiction can be determined only by a closer study of the individual books. These will be grouped according to the social problem with which they deal; a few of the most important and most typical will be discussed in detail. The classes thus formed cover a wide range of thought, first—The problem of general social unrest; second—Labor problems; third—Socialization of the modern church; fourth—Immigration and Americanization; fifth—Criminology and liquor problems; sixth—Socialization of the newspaper and other problems.

(1) The first group deals with the general social unrest. Probably the most popular subject in this field, from the standpoint of attack, is that of so-called "big business." Many books have been written condemning this prominent aspect of modern life.

Such a story is found in Booth Tarkington's book *The Turmoil*. Mr. Tarkington shows big business to be the predominating aim and aspiration of our modern life. He approaches the prob-

lem by means of contrasting characters; a father to whom business for bigness alone is the main spring of happiness; and his youngest son, whom poor health has kept free from this influence, and has caused to value the finer things of life more highly. The younger son possesses a sense of the individual's responsibility to society, but because of his weakness of body, his sense of obligation is intangible and unexpressed. When, finally, through the death of his brothers, he too is forced to take his place in his father's business, he proves to be as efficient as his brothers had been. In his mind, however, lies a vision of a different kind of business which he would bring about, a business, not for bigness alone, but for the benefit of those whose toil makes it possible, as well as for the man at the top.

The social thought is suggested by the story, rather than plainly stated. The author has, however, given a striking picture in which the suggestion can not be missed. The worth of the material lies largely in the true values of life it portrays. It shows the inadequacy of advancement and power secured at the expense of society as a whole.

The novels which fall under this classification are for the most part general in character. They are not, however, of less value because of this fact. They are particularly important in their emphasis upon the false standards which, in modern society, have made money the criterion of social standing, regardless of intellectual, or even moral fitness. Already there is developing a social consciousness which, it is to be hoped, such stories will help to advance.

(2) A second large group of books deals with labor problems. One of the most interesting, and possibly the most valuable, of these books is Ernest Poole's *The Harbor*. The story falls naturally into three parts. The first part pictures the harbor of New York as seen through the eyes of a sensitive small boy who goes from his home from time to time, without the knowledge of his parents, to play amidst the fascinating, unfamiliar scenes of the water-front. In this part Mr. Poole depicts life among the poor of the harbor district; he describes the great, dormant, downtrodden masses, and shows how impossible it is for their children to build up high ideals and ambitions, when the surroundings forced upon them by our industrial system, "the reali-

ties of life," Mr. Poole calls these, tend constantly to tear them down.

In the second part, he shows the harbor as seen through the eyes of an adult. It is no longer awe-inspiring, but a place which must be altered. This great change, he believes, will come through the rule of efficiency. There must be great minds to lead the way. He places his faith in the combination of a social viewpoint and efficiency, and believes that the city should scientifically plan and rebuild the harbor district.

The third part of the story again shows the harbor, but from a still different viewpoint. It is now shown as seen through the eyes of a man in close touch with the life of its people. This man tells of a great strike which gives promise of a people awakened, and shows the harbor which he feels can be purified only by its own force, the power of the masses who comprise it. He shows conditions to be such that, if they remain as they are today, civil war between two classes will be the inevitable outcome.

The general problem of the book is that of capital and labor, with particular consideration of the condition of the masses. The standpoint is that of the group rather than of a particular individual. The method of treatment is sincere and emphatic, but not melodramatic. The material is valuable for several reasons. It gives an accurate picture of conditions as they exist about New York Harbor, something which it is impossible to do in a form more acceptable to the general public than fiction. Again, the story suggests two modes of remedy: that from above, efficiency; and that from below, revolution. The greatest weakness of the book is that it suggests no possibility of a middle course between the two mentioned.

A very striking and unusual book is that by Henry Sydnor Harrison, *V. V.'s Eyes*. This story centers around the life and development of Carlye Heth, a rich and beautiful girl, one who is, however, thoroughly selfish and self-centered; and Dr. V. Vivian, or Mr. V. V., a "slum" doctor. Mr. V. V. devotes his time, free of charge, to those poor inhabitants of the "slums." Dr. V. Vivian is, furthermore, a man who lives for others, patterning his life after that of John the Baptist. He sincerely believes in the good will of humanity, and that the "Huns," as

he terms the unthinking rich, only need awakening. It has been said that in portraying the life of Dr. V. V., Mr. Harrison has intended to show the character of a modern Christ. Upon this basis, the story takes on added significance, although without this interpretation it is very impressive. This conception, too, explains Mr. Harrison's purpose when, in the end, Dr. V. V. is killed just as he has attained his desire and proved his point by showing that one family of "Huns," at least, are capable of awakening.

The book also deals with the problem of capital and labor. The author seeks to find a common meeting place for rich and poor, where the ideal will coincide with the real. Particularly does this novel show the need of improved factory laws and child labor legislation, and the necessity of an awakening of public opinion. The story is that of an individual, but through this individual we perceive group problems and needs. In the author's portrayal of Dr. V. V. we find a character which is of value as a social example to others. The whole story makes a strong and convincing plea for social betterment.

The books heretofore mentioned have dealt with the general problem of capital and labor; there is a smaller group which tells of conditions in specific industries. The most important, as well as the most interesting, is Upton Sinclair's recent book, *King Coal*. A young American of the upper class, Hal Warner, desires to learn at first hand the condition of the coal miners in order to help them, and decides to seek employment under the fictitious name of Joe Smith. He finds difficulty even in entering the camps; not knowing the usual procedure, he is immediately suspected of being a professional organizer or strike leader. After finally securing employment he learns with growing horror the shameless, inhuman way in which the mine owners subjugate and then exploit their employees. His great sympathy and resolution to help these people earns for Joe Smith a place among his fellow workers. Later a terrible and unnecessary mine disaster leads the workmen to revolt against the company. The revolt is unsuccessful as far as actual permanent gains are concerned, but it leaves on the hearts of a once heterogeneous group, a unity of purpose and a group solidarity which will count when another and a more propitious time for revolt arrives. Hall's summer

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experiment leaves him with a resolve to dedicate his life to the purpose of improving such conditions as he has seen.

Outside the evident sincerity shown in the book, Mr. Sinclair, in a postscript, has explained the fundamental facts on which the story is based, and has given his sources of information for these facts. It is seldom that truths concerning conditions in coal mines are brought to light in so readable and popular a form as Mr. Sinclair's novel.

(3) The best book on the subject of the socialization of the church is probably Winston Churchill's *The Inside of the Cup*. Through the personal struggle of an individual, a minister, Mr. Churchill has emphasized the failure of the old way and the possibilities of the new. The author's treatment of the story shows that he is not writing lightly upon the subject, but has thought deeply before expressing his opinion. He has used his characters to express at length his ideas on the subject. The entire story revolves about one central idea, from which arise other questions of social import. The material presented is valuable. Mr. Churchill has described a great church, located in close proximity to one of the worst streets of a large city, but utterly failing to improve the conditions of this section. The church is dominated by the powerful few; those of social position are welcome; there is no room for the poor. Furthermore, the "few" demand strictly orthodox preaching, with vice kept in the background, and the rights of the masses unrecognized. With the gradual awakening of the preacher to the failure of his ministry, arises the conviction that the church must change in order to meet the needs of a new society. True Christianity is more than dead dogmas. The church should be made the dominant factor in the lives of the people. It should help them to meet the problems of life, not repel them by cold theology. Mr. Churchill has suggested another social problem, the evil of tenements, especially to children, who are learning vice and contracting disease under crowded living conditions.

(4) The novels which are written on the subject of immigration and Americanization may be classified in two main groups: those which portray the problems found in connection with foreigners who came to this country to make their homes,

and those which depict the problems of the Negro who has long lived here.

Almost all of the books of the first group are written from the standpoint of the attitude of America toward the immigrants. One of the most valuable is Edith Miniter's *Our Natupski Neighbors*. Kani Natupski, his wife, and children come to live in West Holly, a small town in Massachusetts. They buy a farm and settle down to live according to the standards and customs of the old country. Their advent into the community causes a flurry of comment and criticism; they give West Holly its direct contact with the immigration problem. Both the newcomers and the towns-people fail utterly to comprehend each other. The foreigners cannot understand why the Americans waste space on flower gardens, and the Americans cannot understand why the Polanders will live according to standards which provide for nothing beyond mere existence.

The second part of the book deals with the Americanization of the children. It shows the slowly developing realization of a difference between their home and the homes of others, and their attempts to change the old for the new. Their Americanization comes largely through education which, when they are young the law forces upon them, but which is later voluntarily sought.

This book, in its treatment of a typical alien group, graphically represents a situation common in many communities today. America is shown as a country in which no preparation has been made for the reception of immigrants. They come here, but we, instead of helping them to secure the highest ideals, leave them to work out blindly their own adjustments. In the second place, the story describes the process of assimilation of the younger generation with education as the leading factor.

Another story, Elias Tobenkin's *Witte Arrives* portrays the life of a Russian Jewish boy who came to this country when ten years of age. It is a simple, unscientific portrayal of his introduction to American life and customs. The very ease with which the story moves detracts from its value so far as the immigration problem is concerned. The boy encounters no particular difficulties in his life in the new world. The material gives an insight into the home life of a high class Jewish family. When we know people in their homes, we are better able to judge them. Mr.

Tobenkin attacks the problem of race-prejudice, and of the inequality of capital and labor.

While many Southern stories have been written, only a few bear directly upon the social problems which confront the South today. Octave Thanet's *By Inheritance* is both constructive and valuable. Miss Agatha Danforth, a wealthy New England woman, is interested in the Negro. Her interest is further stimulated by her liking for a mulatto boy whom she has been helping through Harvard. This young man, Charles Danton, has almost persuaded her to found an institution for the higher education of the Negro. At this time she is called South to the bedside of her nephew who is ill. She takes this opportunity to make a direct study of the Southern Negro, and is very much surprised by the conditions. She finds a people living at a distinctly different level of civilization than their white brothers. The low moral standards have not yet developed to the higher level of a more advanced civilization. She also finds a people who are often childlike in their judgments, ruled more completely by superstition and emotion than by reason. Charles Danton also comes South and sees, as does Miss Danforth, the weaknesses of his race. In him we find described the utterly hopeless situation of a man who, through no fault of his own, is ostracized from the society of his intellectual equals, and who is far above the level of his own people. As a result of her investigation Miss Danforth, and Danton also, has reached the conclusion that book education is not the solution needed for the Negro problem, as Negroes are not yet ready for it. The suggestion is offered that industrial training is probably more appropriate to their capabilities and needs.

Without overshadowing the plot, Miss Thannel has rather thoroughly analyzed a serious situation. The conclusions which she has reached seem justifiable. The mass of Southern Negroes are not yet ready for higher education. Of equal value are the sketches given of the lives of some of these people, which create in the reader a more friendly, tolerant attitude of mind. If all people could consider the Negro in the spirit which Miss Thanet has employed, this in itself would help to solve the problem.

(5) The books dealing with the subjects of criminology and liquor have been grouped together because almost invariably the two problems are found co-existent. The novels which deal with

criminology are of two general types: first, those which expose prison conditions; second, those which attack society in its attitude toward the criminal. *The Star Rover* by Jack London is probably the most impressive of the first group because of the gruesome facts it presents. It is the story of the life of a man imprisoned at San Quentin; it pictures the horrors of prison life, the dull monotony, the cells, the dark rooms, the straight jacket, and the many other torturous contrivances of the old prison system. It shows the imperative need of prison investigation, and reform of conditions. The scenes are depicted effectively. The reader suffers with the prisoner. The picture so drawn is, fortunately, of passing value, for such conditions are being changed.

That society is largely responsible for the making of many criminals, is a phase of the problem of crime which is emphasized in several unpleasant novels. One of these is Nathan Kussy's *The Abyss*. A young Jewish boy, left alone in the world through the death of his mother, is thrown among the criminals of Mulberry Bend. He is finally detected in crime and sentenced to sixty days' imprisonment. From this time on, the boy is spotted by all the detectives on the force. He makes an earnest effort to reform, but having once acquired the stigma of a jail sentence, his efforts are in vain. He is ultimately driven back into a life of crime because society will not give him a chance. Mr. Kussy has based his plot upon an important social problem and his revelation of conditions is a step toward securing a needed change in public opinion.

One of the best prohibition novels is that by James Hay, Jr., *The Man Who Forgot*. The prologue shows the man staggering into a rescue mission, delirious from continued drinking, and with all memory of his past life blotted from his mind. Some years later "John Smith" appears in Washington, D. C., as a reform leader for prohibition. He meets great opposition in his work from the liquor interests, which use every means at their command, including bribery, to keep him from securing the passage of a constitutional amendment providing for national prohibition. Regardless of their efforts, he finally succeeds in his attempt through an unusual plan. He goes to men of wealth whose sons have been ruined by liquor and, through their interest

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in the cause, secures one million dollars. With the money thus obtained he brings people from all over the continent to Washington. On a certain day they assemble before the Capitol and by their very number force Congress to consider their desires and pass the bill.

Throughout the book the author bases his main points upon statistical records. The problem, as he conceives it, deals with the evil effects of drink and the possibility of doing away with the liquor business through nation-wide prohibition. The data on the subject are unusually complete. The effects of liquor, economic, moral, social, and physical, are discussed. Then a solution for the problem is offered, which includes: first, national prohibition of the traffic, manufacture, and sale of alcoholic liquors; second, provision of something to take its place; that is, recreation in all forms; third, provision of laws that will insure better housing, sanitation, and so forth. The author recognizes the fact that prohibition to be effective should include more than the abolition of the liquor traffic, and believes that his conception of prohibition would make it "the corner stone of a brand new charity and citizenship."

(6) There remain for consideration varied groups of fiction treating of widely divergent subjects.

Several novels which show the possibilities of a socialized newspaper are of particular interest.

Samuel Adams' *The Clarion* opens with an introduction which presents Hal Certain, a small boy, traveling with his father, an itinerant patent medicine dealer. Many years pass. The story opens again with Mr. Surtaine—no longer "Certain"—a man sixty years of age and now many times a millionaire, because of the ever increasing popularity of his many "false" remedies.

Hall Surtaine has just returned from Europe where he has been at school and acquired social ideals. Because of his absence, he is entirely ignorant of the nature of his father's business. When an article appears in the *Clarion*, a local newspaper, exposing the "Certain Fake," Hal, whose father has just given him \$250,000 buys the paper, both because of an interest in that line of work, and of a direct intention to refute the slander. Hal then starts on his career as an editor, having decided to publish an absolutely honest social newspaper. To accomplish this end he

enlists the sympathy and co-operation of the staff. The remainder of the book deals with two main propositions; the difficulties of running a social newspaper, and the possibilities for good which such a paper offers. Hal finds that the worst tendency is to show favoritism for one's friends or even one's family. He meets his greatest problem of this kind when he finally realizes the fraudulent character of his father's business.

Again, an impartial, honest press is sure to lose many of its advertisers, who furnish the main financial support of a newspaper. It is also disappointing to find that just those people whom a social newspaper is designed to help are often the most bitter toward it. The possibilities of such a paper are shown in the account of what the *Clarion* did to improve local conditions. First, it exposed housing conditions and then through the publication of owners' names secured immediate action in the matter. Second, it refused to publish advertisements which are framed for the direct purpose of misleading the poor and ignorant, such as patent medicine and worthless stock advertisements. Third, a spreading plague, which had been hidden for fear it would interfere with the financial returns of "Old Home Week," was brought to the attention of the public.

A critical analysis of the book shows that the author has a full appreciation of the problems of the newspaper world. The place of a social newspaper in the community and the difficulties of securing actual freedom of the press, are the chief questions that are discussed. The value of the material lies in the picture given of the practical problems of a newspaper which tries to free itself from the domination of big business, an influence which makes reliable news in all matters impossible. Constructively, the book shows how a socialized newspaper can wield a tremendous power for good. It creates a desire on the part of the reader for an honest press. In the contrast between Hal and his father the reader can feel the presence of a new social attitude.

There is at least one book of recent American fiction which treats of certain social phases of rural life. This is *The Brown Mouse* by Herbert Quick. The principal emphasis is laid upon the fact that country schools, patterned after city schools, do not meet the needs of the pupils or of the rural community. Jim Irwin realizes this weakness; he accepts a position as district school

teacher, and proceeds to reconstruct the school program according to his idea of what a rural education should mean. The courses of instruction, while covering the same general fields as those of the city school, are of practical value to the country boy. For example, arithmetic is taught through solving mathematical problems of farm life. In this way the children not only learn principles and methods, but serve the community as a whole. Every line of study in the model school is arranged according to this system. Mr. Quick has attacked an important rural social problem in a constructive way.

An extensive group of books portrays the general problems of the less fortunate classes in society. *Dear Enemy*, written by Jean Webster, deals with the reform of an orphanage. Sallie McBride, a college graduate, is put in charge of an orphanage by a girl friend who was at one time an inmate of the institution. This friend, Judy, the heroine of Miss Webster's book, *Daddy Long Legs*, gives the money by which John Grier Home is made into a model institution. The book presents many socially useful suggestions for an ideal children's home, and arouses in the reader a desire to investigate existing conditions.

Another story, Kate Boshers's *People Like That*, emphasizes woman's responsibility for her sisters. A wealthy young woman makes her home for a time among the poor people of her city, in order to live as they do and to understand their problems. While there she comes in contact with several girls who are leading immoral lives. In her endeavor to help these girls, she discovers that the majority of them who are living by immoral practices, are doing so, not because of a desire for such a life, but because they are forced into it. One of the common causes of their downfall is misplaced confidence in wealthy young men. A more fundamental cause, the one which Mrs. Boshers wishes to emphasize, is that "good" women are largely responsible for the whole situation. They knowingly overlook the weaknesses and indulgences of their husbands and sons. If "good" women and girls would ostracize the men who live a double life, and would demand a single standard of conduct, the men would be forced to change their ways.

A fitting close to this section of the monograph is found in Mrs. Charlotte P. Gilman's *Moving the Mountain*. In this book Mrs. Gilman visualizes a world in which nearly all social problems have been solved. This new world which she has created she calls a

"baby Utopia." The marvelous change described has all come about in a single generation. A man who for thirty years was lost among the tribes of Tibet, was found by his sister. Together they return to the United States. On the trip and after they arrive, she attempts to explain to him the new conditions and the causes for them.

There is no longer an immigration problem. Immigrants are required to come up to a certain standard, physically, mentally, and morally; they are helped to reach this standard through instruction. A definite eugenics program has been put into practice, and scientific methods of child culture have been adopted. Labor problems are settled through a co-operative organization of work. The necessity of long hours and under pay has been abolished. Everybody must work two hours a day, but almost all people are ambitious and voluntarily work four hours. Women take their places in all kinds of industry, but lose none of their femininity by it. Crime in the old sense is rare, because the improved social conditions, health, and equal distribution of wealth, have removed many forms of temptation. Prisons no longer exist. Jail confinement is never practiced, except as a form of quarantine.

Three main causes for this new civilization are given. One of these is a new religion: "Work is social service, social service is religion;" God is an accepted fact. Another cause is education, not to supply information or develop qualities, but to improve and develop society through the growth of "social spirit—and body." The last, and perhaps the most important factor, is the new position of women. Heretofore the world has been a man-made world. The standards of men have ruled. Now women are on an equal footing; they have refused to accept the double standard and in making a single standard applicable to all persons, they have forced the men to rise to woman's level. Women simply refuse to marry or associate with men who live double lives. Underlying these three causes is one fundamental, basic principle, namely, that ideals are the real governing force in society. The changes that have occurred are due to changes of mind. They could have been made long ago had people desired. Mrs. Gilman makes her strongest point in connection with the new attitude toward eugenics, immigration, and labor problems. The greatest weakness lies in the advocacy of independence in personal careers, to a point where the members of a family are scattered throughout the country, with an over-emphasis on specialization.

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III.

Certain of the more important phases of this monograph may be summarized. Ten and eight-tenths per cent. of the "best sellers" from 1910 to 1917, inclusive, contained extensive social thought. While this proportion is not large, it is significant, as the field of fiction is broad and the requirements for inclusion in the list were strict. Many of the books not selected undoubtedly contain much that is valuable from the sociological standpoint.

The yearly increase in percentage disclosed by the same survey is without doubt indicative of the tendency in the whole field, although probably not in the same proportion. In any case these percentages, both yearly and total, are encouraging in that they indicate a definite and steadily increasing interest of the people as a whole in vital human problems.

An estimate of the preparation which the author has had which qualifies him to write social fiction may be made. Few authors who write on these subjects are trained sociologists or social workers. Certain exceptions may be made as in the case of Ernest Poole or Upton Sinclair, who have made life studies of social conditions. Moreover, where the stories go deeply into a specific problem or attempt to offer a solution for it, adequate preparation is usually shown either in the subject-matter itself, or in the personal history of the man. On the other hand, nearly all authors are content with treating their subjects in a general manner, attempting only to portray conditions which are anti-social in character. For the most part these books show sincere thought and appreciation of the problems presented. It is doubtful whether the intention of the author, except in a few cases, is anything more than to write a commercially salable novel. While it is not contended that the writers are mercenary, yet only a few have in mind the definite purpose of spreading social thought.

Almost all the problems common to sociology have been presented, at least in certain aspects, in fiction. The trend of thought seems to be in the direction of discussing specific problems rather than general social conditions. Within the specific groups, however, there are still broad fields to be covered.

Another point to be considered is to determine the relative prominence of the individual and the group aspect in the stories. The fact that the books under discussion are novels indicates in itself that few deal directly with the group. Nevertheless, there

are certain books in which the individual's problems are closely interwoven with group problems. Among such stories may be found some of the most valuable books in social fiction. Upton Sinclair's *King Coal* is an example. The larger portion of social fiction treats of the individual as typical of the group. In presenting criminological and related problems a more effective method cannot be found, but the value of many stories in other groups would be greatly enhanced by the introduction of the group aspect. In most of the books discussed, the lives of the characters, or the situations in which they are involved, are directly concerned with definite social problems. A few exceptions to this are found where the author uses his characters merely to give a story interest and fills in the background with discussions of social conditions.

In general, the method of treatment of these subjects is sincere and not melodramatic. A few books may be criticized as being somewhat highly colored, but in many cases this disadvantage is offset by the added vividness secured.

The value of the material to sociology may now be considered. Of most importance are the facts which are presented and the problems that are suggested. This material is constructive, not in the direct sense, but because it educates the public. Public opinion must be aroused before needed reforms can be made. In a few instances solutions are offered, but the value in these cases depends largely upon the training of the author. In stories dealing with labor problems the tendency is to offer solutions which are radical, even revolutionary, and which cannot be accepted by sociologists. Where remedies have been suggested in connection with other problems, they have been worthy of scientific consideration. While the social materials that are presented in fiction have a very definite value, they are small in quantity, and as yet can give only a comparatively slight impulse to the spread of social thought.

The author who writes avowedly social novels is inclined to make his books rather long and didactic. The average reader who seeks relaxation for a short period of time will not select such stories. Public sentiment is reflected in the attitude of critics who condemn many of these novels as tracts. There is a decided tendency, which constitutes a weakness, toward the combination of social thought and fiction to the detriment of the fiction. Either the authors need to change their methods, or the average reading public needs to be educated to a point higher than the present level, before the worth of social fiction will be fully recognized.

The third general question is, what place can fiction hold in the future spread of social thought? The field, in some respects, would seem illimitable, that is, of course, if the present weaknesses are overcome. Opportunity for doing great social service work is open to the writers of fiction. Through fiction as a medium, a reading public can be reached which can be approached in no other way, outside the short story and the press. Fiction will find its strongest fort in the presentation of facts. Solutions for problems may be offered, but there is a danger that these will not be commendable. If there can be developed a corps of trained sociological novelists, then fiction may present solutions as well as conditions.

In any case, the chief function of social fiction, both at present and in the future, is to arouse thought on all questions concerning the welfare of society, and by this stimulus to contribute to the betterment of conditions. There is no reason why stories based on sound social principles, and presenting facts of the greatest public value, cannot be made as interesting as purely imaginative material. Students of today, who will be the writers of tomorrow, should make literature and social service co-operating agents.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibliography of American Fiction Which Deals with Social Problems 1910 to 1917 (Inclusive)¹

I. General Social Unrest.

- Churchill, Winston, *A Far Country*. Macmillan Co., N. Y., 1915. A portrayal of modern industry in its unsocial and anti-social phases.
- Cook, George, *The Chasm*. Frederick A. Stokes Co., N. Y., 1910. An attack upon capitalism with socialism offered as a solution.
- Dreiser, Theodore, *The Financier*. Harper & Bros., N. Y., 1912. Portrays the menace of big business.
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- Glaspell, Susan, *The Visioning*. Frederick A. Stokes Co., N. Y., 1911. An attack on capitalism.
- Harrison, Henry Sydnor, *Queed*. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y., 1911. Shows benefits to be derived from applying sociological principles to modern problems.
- Herriek, Robert, *Clark's Field*. Macmillan Co., N. Y., 1914. Deals with capitalism in its relation to other social problems.
- *A Life for a Life*. Macmillan Co., N. Y., 1910. Shows the failure of capitalism.
- Howard, George F. B., *God's Man*. Bobbs Merrill Co., Indianapolis, 1915. A picture of New York as dominated by greed and money and the effect of this aspect on those who come in contact with it.
- Hughes, Rupert, *The Thirteenth Commandment*. Harper & Bros., N. Y., 1916. A novel showing modern social conditions in which the commandment "Thou shalt not spend all thou earnest," is the keynote.
- Laut, Agnes C., *New Dawn*. Moffat Yard & Co., N. Y., 1914. A story which shows that modern society teaches many false ideals, among which is an over-emphasis of the importance of financial success.

¹The books which have been reviewed in the foregoing pages are marked with an asterisk.

Talbot, Richard J., *Chainbreakers*. Roxburgh, Boston, 1914.

The story of a minister who, driven from his church because he refuses to use tainted money, becomes the champion of various reform movements.

*Tarkington, Booth, *The Turmoil*. Harper & Bros., N. Y., 1915. A story which emphasizes the unsocial phases of big business.

II. Labor Problems.

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Bechdolt, Frederick R., *Hard Rock Man*. Moffat Yard & Co., N. Y., 1910. The story of an Irishman who comes to America, and seeks his fortune as a worker in the mines.

Child, Richard W., *Jim Hands*. Macmillan Co., N. Y., 1910. A simple story of factory workers and factory conditions.

Churchill, Winston, *The Dwelling Place of Light*. Macmillan Co., N. Y., 1917. Deals with the problem of the social evil among the laboring classes, labor problems in general, and the connection between the two.

Edwards, Albert, *Comrade Yetta*. Macmillan Co., N. Y., 1913. The struggle between capital and labor is shown as the fault of the system rather than of the individual.

*Poole, Ernest, *The Harbor*. Macmillan Co., N. Y., 1915. Centers upon the relation of capital and labor with a consideration of both aspects of the problem.

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*Sinclair, Upton, *King Coal*. Macmillan Co., N. Y., 1917. Shows the industrial and social conditions of workers in the coal mines, as seen by a miner.

Waller, Mary E., *Famsted Quarries*. Little & Co., N. Y., 1910. A story of American social and industrial conditions to-day, with particular reference to quarry workers.

Willis, Honore, *Still Jim*. Frederick A. Stokes Co., N. Y., 1915. Portrays the social phases of the reclamation service.

III. The Church and the Community.

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*Harrison, Henry Sydnor, *V. V.'s Eyes*. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y., 1915. Deals with the problem of capital and labor.

Hughes, Rupert, *Miss 318 and Mr. 37*. Revell & Co., Chicago & N. Y., 1912. The employees' side of department store life is depicted in this novel.

Jackson, Chas. T., *My Brother's Keeper*. Bobbs Merrill & Co., Indianapolis, 1910. A story of social conditions among the laboring classes, primarily mill workers.

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O'Brien, Howard, *New Men for Old*. Moffatt Yard & Co., N. Y., 1914. A plea for altruism in dealing with labor.

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IV. The Social Problems of Marriage and Divorce.¹

Atherton, Gertrude F., *Perch of the Devil*. Frederick A. Stokes Co., N. Y., 1914. Attacks the divorce evil.

Bartlett, Frederick, *Triflers*. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston and N. Y., 1917. Shows that treating marriage lightly is a mistaken attitude.

Corbin, John, *The Edge*. Duffield & Co., N. Y., 1915. Deals with marriage and married life in modern society.

Norris, Kathleen, *The Heart of Rachael*. Doubleday Page & Co., Garden City, N. Y., 1916. An arraignment of divorce.

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V. The Feminist Movement.

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- *Tobenkin, Elias, *Witte Arrives*. Frederick A. Stokes Co., N. Y., 1916. The story of a Russian Jewish immigrant's experience in America.

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- Dawson, Frances W., *The Scar*. Small Maynard & Co., Boston, 1910. A study of the social conditions of the native southern whites.
- *Thanet, Octave, *By Inheritance*. Bobbs Merrill Co., Indianapolis, 1910. Deals with the problem of education in relation to the Negro.

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